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论英语专业翻译方向硕士生翻译写作
能力的培养

On How to Cultivate the Translational
Writing Abilities of English Major Postgraduates
Learning Translation

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Abstract

Translators often find themselves stuck in situations where they “can only feel it but cannot express it” when they do English-Chinese translation. In other words, most of the time they have no difficulty in understanding the source text, but they just cannot find the proper words, expressions and sentence patterns to translate it into good Chinese. The ultimate cause for this kind of situation boils down to the translator’s poor Chinese. There is still another phenomenon that among the different versions of some famous foreign literary works, those that can better stand the test of time are usually full of literary grace. All these facts enlighten us to realize that the translator’s command of Chinese, especially his writing abilities in Chinese, plays a decisive role in the process of English-Chinese translation. Yang Shizhuo first proposes the concept of translational writing and points out that translational writing abilities are the key factors determining the final quality of the translation. Based on this research, this thesis aims at analyzing how to cultivate and improve the translational writing abilities of English major postgraduates learning translation in order to complete the framework of translational writing theory.

The thesis is composed of four parts. The introduction starts with two versions of the same passage and by comparing the two different versions, the argument is stated clearly. The translator’s writing abilities are crucial for deciding whether the translation is excellent or mediocre. Therefore, English major postgraduates should spare no efforts to cultivate and improve their translational writing abilities.

In Chapter One, the author elaborates the three important theories for this argument—translational writing theory, register theory and language character theory. Translational writing theory is not only concerned about the translator’s comprehensive abilities of the source language and translation skills, but also pays more attention to the translator’s writing skills in the target language. It aims at guiding people in their translational writing practice, enhancing their translational

writing abilities and improving people's writing skills in translation. In the process of translating which consists of two important stages, namely, comprehension and expression, a good translation well expressing the content and style of the source text is possible only when its register is identified and re-expressed in the target text. Language character theory has provided a solid theoretical foundation for the translator to make full use of the good expressions of the target language in translational writing process.

Chapter Two comes as the key part of the thesis. The author probes in great detail into how to cultivate and improve the translational writing abilities of English major postgraduates learning translation in English-Chinese translation based on the theories discussed in Chapter One. In different stages of translation, there are corresponding means to achieve this goal. Before translation, a large amount of knowledge should be accumulated for the following translation, including knowledge about the true essence of characters of the Chinese language and various kinds of other knowledge through extensive reading. In translation, the focus should be put on the cultivation of comprehension skills and re-expression skills. Six specific methods have been discussed in detail, namely, referring to parallel texts of the source text, referring to the translation versions of the source text in other languages, deciding translation unit, deciding translation strategies on the basis of the source text's register, practicing writing skills and making full use of the good expressions of the target language. After translation, revision and polishing should be done to achieve faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance.

The conclusion serves as a summary of the whole thesis, in which the author restates the argument and points out the limitations of the thesis and how to improve it.

Key words: translational writing abilities; grammatology; register theory; language character theory; parallel text

摘要

译者在英汉翻译中经常会碰到“只可意会不可言传”的情况：即对原文的理解大致没有困难，但却找不到合适的词汇、表达和句型把它译成地道的汉语，之所以会出现这种情况，归根结底是因为译者汉语水平不济。此外，一些外国名著往往有多种译本，而真正能流传久远的通常是那些译文文字地道、优美的译本。这无疑给了我们启示：译者的汉语能力，尤其是汉语写作能力在英译汉过程中起着举足轻重的作用。杨士焯率先提出了翻译写作学的概念，指出翻译写作能力是决定译文质量优劣的关键因素。本文在这个研究的基础上进一步完善翻译写作学的框架，致力于研究在英汉翻译中如何培养和提高英语专业翻译方向硕士生的翻译写作能力。

本文一共分为四部分，引言部分利用一篇文章的两个译本对比引出文章的论点：在理解水平相当的前提下，译者的写作能力是决定译文精彩与平庸的关键，因此，英语专业翻译方向硕士生应致力于培养和提高自己的翻译写作能力。

第一章详细阐述了这一观点的三个重要理论基础，即翻译写作学、语域理论和语性说。翻译写作学不仅关注对源语的理解能力和翻译技巧，更加注重译者的译文写作能力，它的宗旨就是指导人们的翻译写作实践，增强人们的译写能力，提高人们的翻译写作水平。翻译时，即在理解和表达过程中，只有识别和重现语域，才能在翻译写作过程中写出与原文内容、风格一致的译文。语性说的提出为译者在翻译写作过程中充分发挥译语语言优势提供了理论依据。

第二章是文章的重点，结合第一章的理论详细探讨了如何在英译汉实践中培养和提高英语专业翻译方向硕士生的翻译写作能力。首先是译前的知识储备，主要包括充分掌握中文的语性，广泛阅读，积累各方面知识；其次是译中理解技能和重新表达技能的培养，主要分为以下六点：1. 运用平行文本，2. 运用其他语种译本，3. 确定翻译单位，4. 根据语域确定翻译策略，5. 写作技巧训练，6. 发挥译语语言优势；最后是译后的修改润色，使译文实现信、达、雅。

最后是文章的结语部分，总结了全文的主要内容，强调了论点，并指出了文章的局限和可以进一步完善的地方。

关键词：翻译写作能力 写作学 语域理论 语性说 平行文本

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Introduction

During their undergraduate stage of study, English major postgraduates have already taken some translation courses from which they have obtained some basic knowledge of translation, gained a preliminary understanding of its basic theories, grasped the similarities and differences between English and Chinese, and mastered some commonly used translation skills. Besides, their English proficiency has been significantly improved due to the various professional courses, such as English Listening, English Reading, Comprehensive English, English Writing, etc. Therefore, they can translate English texts or discourses of medium difficulty into Chinese without much trouble. Their translations are usually faithful to the original and the language is fluent and accurate. Our main concern is that at the graduate level, apart from having a further study of the translation theories, in what ways they should endeavor to improve their translation abilities. Now, let's take two translation versions of Francis Bacon's *Of Studies* as an example.

e.g.1:

Source text: Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment, and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience.

Version 1: 读书为学的用途是娱乐、装饰和增长才识。在娱乐上学问的主要的用处是幽居养静；在装饰上学问的用处是辞令；在长才上学问的用处是对于事务的

判断和处理。因为富于经验的人善于实行，也许能够对个别的事情一件一件地加以判断；但是最好的有关大体的议论和对事务的计划与布置，乃是从有学问的人来的。在学问上费时过多是偷懒；把学问过于用作装饰是虚假；完全依学问上的规则而断事是书生的怪癖。学问锻炼天性，而其本身又受经验的锻炼；盖人的天赋有如野生的花草，他们需要学问的修剪；而学问的本身，若不受经验的限制，则其所指示的未免过于笼统。

Version 2: 读书足以怡情，足以傅彩，足以长才。其怡情也，最见于独处幽居之时；其傅彩也，最见于高谈阔论之中；其长才也，最见于处世判事之际。练达之士虽能分别处理细事或一一判别枝节，然纵观统筹、全局策划，则舍好学深思者莫属。读书费时过多易惰，文采藻饰太盛则骄，全凭条文断事乃学究故态。读书补天然之不足，经验又补读书之不足。盖天生才干犹如自然花草，读书然后知如何修剪移接；而书中所示，如不以经验范之，则又大而无当。

Of the two versions above, version 1 can be regarded as a correct translation in which the main idea of the source text is accurately conveyed but the language is relatively simple. However, version 2 can be considered an excellent translation with fluent rhythm for it not only expresses the meaning of the source text but also represents its style by using some words of striking literary grace. As English major postgraduates learning translation, we are obliged to make efforts to achieve the standard of the second version on the basis of the first version. In other words, we should spare no efforts to make our translation excellent instead of just being satisfied with correct translation.

We can conclude from the above analysis that during the process of English-Chinese translation, the translator must have a good command of the Chinese language in order to make full use of its good expressions and come up with beautiful sentences of high quality. However, some English majors studying translation and many professional translators tend to focus only on learning English and ignore the study and improvement of their Chinese. They just do not realize the fact that the proficiency of the Chinese language plays a crucial role in the English-Chinese translation work. Chen Tingyou, a famous translator, believes that whether one can translate an English passage into Chinese basically relies on his English proficiency

while whether he can translate it well or not mainly depends on his Chinese abilities. After one gets a full understanding of an English sentence or paragraph, the quality of the final translation version is largely determined by one's Chinese proficiency which would usually make a large difference (Chen Tingyou, 1980:229). The studies of many literary translation works have shown that the reason why some versions can better stand the test of time such as those made by Lin Shu, Fu Lei, Yang Bi, etc., is that they are filled with beautiful words, sentences and of great literary grace. The profound knowledge and accomplishment of those great translators is well reflected in their writing of the translation works. Therefore, the translator's writing ability is of paramount importance and is the key factor determining whether the translation will be excellent or mediocre as long as there is no big problem in understanding. Yang Shizhuo first proposes the concept of translational writing in the foreword of his book —*A Textbook on English-Chinese Translation* (2006), and then further elaborates on this subject in “A Brief Introduction to Translational Writing” (2008), pointing out that the translator's translational writing abilities are the key factors determining the quality of the translation. On this basis, this thesis puts forward the argument that for the English major postgraduates learning translation, cultivating and improving their translational writing abilities should be their top priority during their postgraduate studies. There is one point needed to be made clear first. Due to the limited time and reference materials as well as the author's limited research capacity, this thesis only focuses on how to cultivate and improve their translational writing abilities in translating English into Chinese. Practice has continuously justified that a qualified translator must possess basic translational writing skills, while a good translator needs to have more knowledge and accomplishment of literature as well as strong translational writing abilities.

Chapter One Theoretical Foundations

From the analysis above, it is recognized that as a translator, it is far from enough to be just satisfied with knowing “how to translate”. The main focus of our study and application of translation theories is to find out “how to translate well”. Thus it is extremely important to foster our translational writing skills and the latest theory of translational writing can provide a theoretical basis for this goal.

1.1 Translational Writing Theory

In his article “A Brief Introduction to Translational Writing” (2008), Yang Shizhuo has systematized the translation research guiding translation practice and put forward a new theory named translational writing. He has explained the characteristics of its basic theory and the common requirements of translation and writing. The article also points out that translational writing is an activity of reproducing in another language the spirit of the original text and a dynamic process of transforming the thought process of one language into symbols of another language (Yang Shizhuo, 2008:19). He has specified the core system of translational writing theory as the interaction among “perception”, “thought operation” and “expression”. Translational writing theory is not only concerned about the translator’s comprehensive abilities of the source language and translation skills, but also pays more attention to the translator’s writing skills in the target language. These viewpoints are very enlightening in that it combines the study of translation with grammar, considering the simple translation act as a complex process of the mutual integration of translation with writing. As a result, it opens up a very valuable research field for studying how the translation theories can be applied to guide the translation practice. In this article, Yang states clearly that the purpose of Translational Writing Theory is to guide people in their translational writing practice, enhance their translational writing abilities and improve their writing skills in translation (Yang

Shizhuo, 2008:20). It should be clarified that in previous studies made by Lin Lili (2009), Ma Yining (2010) and Liu Shujuan (2010), the emphasis is all on its instructive meaning for the translation of literary works, but in fact, translational writing theory is not limited to literary translation. Including but more than literary translation, it has a great guiding significance for the translation of any type of text in the re-expression phase.

1.1.1 Grounded Theories of Translational Writing Theory

1.1.1.1 Translator's Subjectivity

The awkward position of the translator is often mentioned in the past discussions about translation. There is a popular statement about the translator's situation in which the translator is called "one servant of two masters" (Yang Jiang, 1993:47). The reason lies in the fact that a translator serves both the original author and the readers. If we objectively observe and analyze the activities of the translator in the recreation activity of reproducing the source text in the target language, we can find that the translator always plays a major role no matter in the stage of reading and comprehending the original text or that of interpreting and expressing it. We discussed with many translators about how they can bring their subject role into full play within the limited space of creation as the subject of translation activities. It should be noted that among the present research findings of translation, there is a very large amount of research on translation methods and techniques. Unfortunately, such studies tend to stop on the surface of finding translation techniques but rarely involve the main role of different translators. But in fact, since the translator is the subject of translation activities, many of their subjective factors such as their personality, temperament, mental endowments, knowledge, language proficiency, and even their positions and moral factors have a direct and important impact on translation activities(Xu Jun, 2001:22).

Zha Mingjian and Tian Yu define the translator's subjectivity as follows: Translator's subjectivity refers to the subjective initiative of the translator—the subject of translation—exhibited in the translation activity to achieve the goal of

translation on the premise of respecting the translation object. Its basic features are the self-conscious cultural awareness, humanistic character, cultural and aesthetic creativity of the translation subject (Zha Mingjian et al, 2003:22). Running through the entire process of translation, the translator's subjectivity is in pivotal status and plays the most active role in translation.

The translator is a reader and a re-writer at the same time. As a reader, the translator needs to understand the source text in the first place and as a re-writer, he strives to perform a cross-cultural transform of the source text on the premise of taking the reader of the target text into consideration. Before doing translation, the translator should first read the source text very carefully, thinking about the background described by the text, seeking to grasp the true meaning of every sentence accurately and seizing the features of its wording as well as the style and so on. At this stage, the translator is only a reader. His social and cultural attributes, for example, gender, age, experiences, degree of education, social status and other factors such as the times he lives in and national cultural traditions will affect his understanding of the source text. Lu Xun says: "As for the objective of *A Dream in Red Mansions*, different readers have different opinions about it. Scribes see changes from it, moralists see obscenity, gifted scholars see sentiment, revolutionists see grievances and rumor-mongers see secrets in the palace (Tr. by this author)." (Lu Xun, 2005:179) However, the translator is different from the ordinary reader in that the former is responsible for re-expressing the meaning of the source text. So when he reads the article, he will try every means to dig out its hidden meanings on the basis of preserving its integrity. This kind of reading is of strong subjective initiative itself. Since the translator lives in a limited period of time in history and the potential meanings of a work can not be discovered by readers from one specific era, it is impossible for the translator to understand the article completely. Some meanings can only be perceived by the reader as time goes on. A famous saying of Reception Aesthetics goes like this: "If there are one thousand readers, there will be one thousand different Hamlets." From this, we can also arrive at the conclusion that "if there are one thousand translators, there will be one thousand different Hamlets" as

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